

# CASE STUDY

## NHS PURCHASING AND SUPPLY AGENCY

### Summary

#### Needs

- Official recognition that security measures are effective
- To provide a systematic framework for managing sensitive information
- Assurance that operations of the computer team are to a formal standard

#### Benefits

- The Agency has never had a security incident caused by a staff member since gaining BSI certification
- The computer network has been kept virus-free and hacker-free
- Confidence in security has resulted in a vast information sharing system

### Background

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Health. It has the responsibility for ensuring that the NHS in England makes the most effective use of its resources by getting the best possible value for money when purchasing goods and services.

Achieving BSI certification in 2002, the Agency was the first in the public sector to do so, setting an example for others to follow. Now, most public sector organizations comply with the BSI standards even if they do not have official certification.

Every effort is made to help the NHS make savings – by buying through eAuctions, for example. The Agency also carries out research to ensure the NHS has access to the very latest products and treatments available at the very best prices.

### Customer Needs

Information security is a huge priority as much of the Agency's work involves creating, retrieving, analysing and storing information. IT Security Manager, Mark Buggy, explained: "All confidential data remains totally secure and customers also need to feel confident that any data or file sent across to them by email will not be contaminated with a virus." He added: "As well as supplying to a wide range of customers, from GPs to heart specialists, the Agency has to consider customers' needs with regard to packaging, delivery and disposal of products. We have to comply with many regulations and, as holders of the BSI 14001 standard for Environmental Management, the Agency also has to consider environmental issues. Where we can, we promote good environmental practice throughout the National Health Service."

### Benefits

Both clients and staff now have total confidence in the Agency's security measures and have no worries about sharing information. The Information Security Management System (ISMS) has now been implemented across the entire Agency, which employs around 300 people.

Though the Agency has never had a security incident since joining BSI, there is now a set procedure in place for dealing with any incident that might occur. There are also set procedures to keep the network virus and hacker-free. Working towards achieving BSI certification also resulted in the Agency overhauling its anti-virus software.

"When we first started working with BSI in 2002, our anti-virus software was single layered, mainly to prevent a few email viruses," recalls Mr Buggy. "We were made aware that a much more effective software protection was needed."

### BSI's Role

BSI has provided the Agency with advice and recommendations to help them prepare for stringent, six-monthly audits. It has drawn attention to areas where improvements could be made and where new ways of thinking could be introduced.

"BSI keeps us on our toes," explained Mr Buggy. "Standards have to change as the world changes and every time BSI auditors come along to assess us there are new standards to comply with."

"For us it's not just about pass or fail, it's about what we are doing and how we are doing it. It's about discussion and support. Sometimes the auditors have been impressed with our ways of doing things and will then recommend them to other companies. So, quite often, it is not just about maintaining our own standards but also about sharing our own areas of expertise with others."

**"It is critical that our database and information is protected at all times or we could seriously damage our reputation."**

